



2007 Legislative Session Review

Bill Hinkle 13th District State Representative

Serving citizens in:

- Kittitas
- Yakima and
- Grant counties

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Health Care and Wellness
(Ranking Republican)
Appropriations
Early Learning and Children's
Services



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2007 legislative session is in the books. After 105 days of lawmaking, state legislators are now back in their districts spending more time with families and friends. I can tell you that it feels good to be home in Cle Elum again.

This year we saw some successes in Olympia, but also some missed opportunities. I'm pleased that many of the capital and some of the transportation needs of the 13th District were met. I'm also proud to have led efforts to improve services for our most vulnerable children. We also made some enhancements in our public education systems, which include good news for Central Washington University.

However, I'm disappointed about the dramatic increase in state spending and that we were not able to pass any meaningful health care reforms despite the promise of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care Costs and Access. I expand on these issues and others in this newsletter.

I appreciate you taking the time to read about my views. It's an honor and privilege to serve you in the Washington State House of Representatives. Please contact me if I can ever be of assistance to you.

Sincerely,

Bill Hinkle

Inside ...

- Access to affordable health care
- Preparing students for the future
- Tuition waiver increase for Central Washington University
- Capital budget meets local needs
- Transportation budget: Good for Seattle, bad for state
- Irresponsible state operating budget
- Tax relief for fruit and vegetable businesses
- Helping children in need

Representative **Bill Hinkle** • 13th District

Access to affordable health care



I entered this year with **hopes for meaningful health care reform**. This optimism stemmed from the Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care Costs and Access – a governor-appointed, **bipartisan group I was part of** that studied our state health care system.

The **commission's recommendations** to the Legislature **were bold**, but the bill the governor proposed ended up being very timid. In fact, **Senate Bill 5930** does nothing to lower the cost of health insurance, offers no reforms to our private health insurance market, and sends more people into government-run health care. This is not a sustainable or comprehensive approach to our problems.

Solutions that must move forward

I joined Senate Democrats and House and Senate Republicans in **supporting bipartisan reforms** that would have **allowed small businesses** to play a role in helping to **insure their employees**. Unfortunately, House Democrats stripped these provisions out of **Senate Bill 5930** after it passed the Senate unanimously. I will continue to support these ideas and others with the **goal of making health insurance more affordable** for Washingtonians:

- Allowing small businesses to offer health insurance to their employees that is flexible, low-cost and mandate-free
- Changing community rating laws
- Allowing any small-group plan to qualify for the Small Employer Health Insurance Partnership program



Preparing students for the future



Despite major education reform in the early 1990s, we still have too many students failing in our schools. This has left **our state's education system** at an **important crossroads**. The bottom line is **students need to be better prepared for their futures** and, as a state, we have a lot more to do to ensure this outcome.



While Washington Assessment of Student Learning (**WASL scores are improving** in reading and writing, our students are still struggling in math and science. State lawmakers responded by passing **House Bill 1906**, which among other things:

- Establishes timelines for recommendations for three basic math and science curricula for elementary, middle and high school
- Creates an after-school math support program with community-based organizations
- Directs the State Board of Education, with advice from citizen advisory panels, to recommend revisions to the Essential Academic Learning Requirements and Grade Level Expectations in math and science.

WASL changes

Senate Bill 6023 changes the WASL by **delaying the graduation requirements for math and science until 2013**. Reading and writing requirements remain unchanged. The measure also directs the State Board of Education to study whether the WASL should be replaced with end-of-course assessments in math and science.

Tuition waiver increase for Central Washington University

I joined my 13th District seatmate, Rep. Judy Warnick, in sponsoring legislation that **increases opportunities for students at Central Washington University** to receive **tuition waivers**. **House Bill 1497** permanently increases the university's state-funded tuition waiver authority from 8 to 10 percent. Tuition waivers reduce some or all of the operating fees students must pay to attend colleges and universities.



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Capital budget meets local needs



The capital budget funds the construction and repair of public buildings and long-term capital investments. **The 2007-09 capital budget** provides **\$74.8 million** for **25 projects** in the **13th District**, including a new Washington State Horse Park in Cle Elum.

The new **publicly-owned, non-profit Washington State Horse Park** will serve the recreational, competitive and education needs of more than 30,000 horse owners in the state. The facility will generate around **\$8 million** each year in **new economic benefits** to Kittitas County.

I voted "yes" on this budget because it does great things for communities around the state. Other 13th District projects include: Port of Ephrata transportation center; City of Soap Lake Spa and Wellness Center; Moses Lake Museum and Art Center; Central Washington University (eight projects); and Big Bend Community College (four projects).

Transportation budget: Good for Seattle, bad for state



The transportation budget pays for projects around the state, including roads, bridges, railways, ferries, and transit systems. The **2007-09 transportation budget** provides **\$786 million** for **81 projects** in the **13th District**.



I voted "no" on this budget because of its failure to accelerate funding for important projects outside of King County – including the widening of State Route 17 between Ephrata and Moses Lake. I believe the budget is too focused on mega-projects in the Seattle area – at the expense of safety and transport of goods around the state.

I'll continue to work for more funding so our local transportation needs are met.

Irresponsible state operating budget



The state operating budget funds K-12 public schools, human services, higher education, debt services, prisons, and legislative, judicial and government operations. The **2007-09 operating budget** will **spend \$33.5 billion**, which represents a **33 percent increase in state spending since 2005**.

I voted "no" on this budget because it spends too much, does not prioritize state government, and sets our state up for a serious shortfall in the future. It also offers no tax relief for homeowners, farmers or employees of small businesses despite the fact that state government had a \$2 billion surplus. **I supported an effort that offered this tax relief.**

Tax relief for fruit and vegetable businesses



I sponsored legislation that will encourage **fruit and vegetable businesses** to move forward with **expanding their operations**.



House Bill 2032

authorizes businesses to apply for a **deferral of fruit and vegetable processing** and storage taxes before a July 1, 2007 effective date from past legislation. Many businesses were consequently holding off on new construction until that date. They now have the **assurance to move forward**. As a result, the benefits these businesses will receive will go into **new construction, more jobs** and **economic vitality** for the region.



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Helping children in need



We have unfortunate situations in our communities in which children must be removed from their homes and placed in foster care. This **transition should be secure** and **healthy** for these children. And if children are returned to their parents, it is vital these **environments are safe**. With this in mind, I sponsored two measures that were inspired by the sad stories of two young children who were tragically murdered:

Sirita's Law

House Bill 1333, Sirita's (Sotelo) Law, requires the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to conduct background checks and determine services needed for caregivers prior to placing children in their homes. It also requires annual training of law enforcement on child abuse and neglect, and encourages collaboration with DSHS.

Raphael Gomez Act

House Bill 1334, the Raphael Gomez Act, requires DSHS to submit documentation to the courts whenever it makes a recommendation or assertion in a dependency or termination of parental rights case.

Accessing Olympia through the Internet

- **Leg.wa.gov** – Find committee meeting schedules and other information about the Legislature.
- **Access.wa.gov** – Access state agencies, apply for unemployment benefits, find lists of local events and festivals, renew your car tabs, and more.
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